2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

If a man's crops are destroyed by



some sudden calamity, or if he has planted insufficient for his needs, relatives in his own village may be able to help him by giving him baskets of grain or offering him a share in their meals. But if the whole community has been visited by the same affliction, such as a locust swarm or a raider elephant, the householder will move himself and his family to live with other kinsmen in an area where food is less scarce. The lack of permanence of Bemba dwellings and the ample supply of land makes such temporary shifts easy. In fact, with this particular economic system, it is simpler for the needy individuals to move to a district of plenty than for the food itself to be transferred to them. Hospitality of this sort is commonly practised in the hunger season, when families go all over the country 'looking for porridge' (*ukufwayo bwali*), or 'running from hunger' (*ukubutuka nsala*)—the rather dramatic Bemba phrase used to describe the custom of paying long visits to better-off relatives. Hence the legal obligations of kinship result in a particular type of food distribution, both within the village and the surrounding neighbourhood, which is not found in those modern native communities in which a more individual domestic economy is practised.

It must be remembered also, that food and beer are constantly used to fulfil all sorts of social obligations, to reward labour, or to honour men of position. Large quantities of victuals are actually distributed in this manner, and on this use of foodstuffs the political and economic life of the tribe depends. A study of Bemba catering must, therefore, include the division of the commoner's or the chief's supplies with these particular ends in view.

To conclude, we are dealing with a system of domestic economy in which the year's supplies of each householder are distributed between a group of relatives, either within the village or in neighbouring communities, who share the contents of a granary or an eating-pot, and a type of local and political association largely dependent on the provision of meals and beer. The amount of food available for each family, the regularity of the provision from day to day or season to season, and the variations from area to area are largely determined by these purely sociological factors.

*The Bemba Village.*

To describe the structure of a typical Bemba village is at first sight a difficult task, since one of its chief characteristics is its

5:Slaski E-4 (no date) 1950 FQ5 Bemba FQ5
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pants from the contemplation of their loss he makes jokes at the expense of the dead man and behaves in a fashion which in other circumstances would be considered outrageous and would not be tolerated.

Kazembes considered themselves as potentially immortal; thus the death of a Kazembe was attributed to neglect of magical precautions against witchcraft.(1) According to Pinto, slaves and wives of a dead Kazembe were sacrificed and a ten-day period of authorized licence followed during which robberies were allowed.(2)

It was believed that the living and the dead could communicate. Life after death resembled that led while alive.(3)

## RELIGIOUS AND MAGICAL BELIEFS AND RITUAL

The concept of the high-god Lesa is common to the Bemba-speaking peoples. *Lesa*, the creator, is regarded rather as a nature force than a personal deity and is not the object of an organised cult. He manifests himself in thunder, lightning, and the rainbow and can kill by lightning or epidemics, but generally interferes little.

The *ngulu*, nature spirits residing in animals, trees, stones, hills, caves, ponds, waterfalls, can bring good weather and crops and are prayed to in an emergency. This cult is of non-Lunda origin and has probably come from the Chishinga, Lungu and Bemba country. Most of the dwelling-places of these spirits are found on the escarpment hills and on the plateau. The *mfumu ya mipashi* (chiefs of spirits), which can enter and possess people making them dance, are local deities whose beneficient activity is confined to the village or district.

When the general well-being of the community was concerned the spirits of dead Kazembes, *masamos*, were consulted and presented with offerings of cassava, beer and goats. Kazembes were buried at a place north-east of the old capital with which it was connected by a broad pathway(4) still discernible. Each had a shrine which was tended by a guardian-priest, *mwine masamo*,(5) whose office was hereditary. These keepers of the royal graves sought the advice of the oracle when war was contemplated and invoked the assistance of the spirits.(6) The River Lualaba, in which Kazembe the founder of the dynasty rests, was held in veneration. Processions went there annually at harvesting time. It is said that Keleka was the first Kazembe who failed to lead the procession in person, and the famine and smallpox epidemic which later occurred were attributed to his negligence.(7) The Kazembe is said to have been the highest religious authority.(8)

Carved wooden figures representing dead ancestors (*nkisi*) were kept in special huts and received offerings of beer, cassava, flour, hemp and tobacco.(9) Kazembe had several such figures, some named after dead chiefs, which were carried before the army in battle.(10)

(1) Valdez, II, p.242.
(2) Burton, p.128.
(3) Valdez, op.cit., p.243.
(4) Valdez, II, p.231.
(5) Burton, p.103.
(6) Valdez, op.cit., p.248.
(7) Valdez, II, p.257.
(8) ibid., p.243.
(9) Livingstone, I, p.353.
(10) ibid.